

# **Alternative Planning for Sustainable Livelihoods in Bundelkhand Region, Uttar Pradesh**

● **Bharat Dogra with Vansh/ABSSS activists**

**Year of Publishing : 2006**



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# Foreword

Bundelkhand has adequate water resources, good farmland and rich mineral wealth. Then why are its people so poor, why do they have to migrate so much in search of livelihood and why do they face such serious food shortages? These questions have bothered the people of Bundelkhand for a long time. In recent times this concern has turned into grave anxiety as report after report of deaths caused by hunger, or suicides caused by poverty and indebtedness have poured in. More and more people have started asking - Is Bundelkhand going to become the next Vidarbha or the Kalahandi on the poverty/economic distress map of the country?

This should not be allowed to happen and we must do our utmost to bring relief to the people of Bundelkhand as a first step on the path of sustainable development. An important part of this effort is to try to understand where exactly the development strategy has gone wrong in the past and to try to put forward an alternative plan of sustainable development which shows much more potential of meeting basic needs of people on a permanent basis while also protecting environment. It is with this aim that this document is being published and we hope that we'll get valuable suggestions from several friends so that an even better plan can be prepared at a later date. We will like to record our thanks to PACS for supporting this effort.

**Gaya Prasad Gopal**

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# **Alternative Planning for Sustainable Livelihoods in Bundelkhand Region, Uttar Pradesh**

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**Urgency of the situation-Act Now to prevent more poverty-related suicides and hunger-deaths in Bundelkhand.**

Six out of seven districts of Bundelkhand region (Uttar Pradesh) are already included in the list of poorest districts. Several hundred poverty-related deaths, including suicides and hunger deaths, have been reported in recent years. Recent years have seen an aggravation of distress related to drought, abnormal weather conditions and heat wave deaths. Question like 'Is Bundelkhand likely to become another Vidarbha or Kalahandi' are being raised in the media as well as in gatherings of local people. (See Annexure six for more details on situation of distress.) Corrective measures need to be taken immediately to prevent the situation from deteriorating any further.

## ***Methodology and Scope***

To write this paper, the author had several meetings with Vansh/ABSSS activists working in the villages of Bundelkhand region with weaker sections. These resulted



in the preparation of occasional papers which were circulated among some of them. The author visited the areas of work of several activists in Chitrakut, Mahoba and Banda districts and field-notes/reports were prepared and circulated. Some of these reports/notes have been used in the final document or else have been attached to it as annexures. Several annexures have been included to provide additional details on important issues without breaking the continuity of the main report.

The first draft of the Plan was discussed at a workshop held at the ABSSS campus in Chitrakut on September 10, 2006 in the presence of several eminent academics, social activists and journalists of this region. An attempt was then made to incorporate many of the suggestions made here in the first draft. However this document is still presented as a draft document and the final document will be presented after receiving the suggestions on this document, allowing a time of about six months or so.

At the outset I'll like to thank all those friends who have contributed to the preparation of this document. In particular I'll like to mention Sh. Gaya Prasad Gopal and Sh. Bhagvat Prasad of ABSSS for their valuable insights and overall support.

While an alternative plan can have numerous components, mainly sustainable livelihood related issues are considered here.

### **1. Why Search for Alternatives**

There has been an increasing realisation in recent years of the need to look carefully for an alternative paradigm of development. This realisation is based on increasing evidence that existing policies, programmes and priorities have



failed to achieve the basic objective of meeting the basic needs of all people in a sustainable and harmonious way. The problem is not just one of inadequacies at implementation levels. While it is true that both inefficiency and corruption have created serious problems, at the same time it is increasingly realised that even better implementation of existing framework of development is unlikely to result in the achievement of basic needs for all on a sustainable basis in a harmonious way. In fact it is the inadequacy and/or unsuitability of the existing development policies which leads to alienation of people and this in turn leads to conditions in which inefficiency, apathy and irregularities can flourish.

This realisation has led to increasing (but on the whole still inadequate) search for alternative paradigms of development. At a very broad, international level this has taken the form of alternative paradigms which can reduce the threats of most serious global problems like climate change while providing sustainable livelihood to people. It is increasingly agreed that this is the perhaps the most urgent issue of our times. Yet progress on taking it forward is still quite slow due to a number of problems. Perhaps better progress can be made in preparing alternative development plans for smaller regions. While the need for this is mainly rooted in the continuing, in some cases accentuating problems of the people and environment of these regions, an additional reason to take this task forward at the current juncture for our planet is that any remarkable success in protecting environment and protecting livelihoods in conditions of social harmony can also yield lessons as well as inspiration for major global tasks which - it is now quite clear - can not be postponed much longer.

It is in this spirit that the task of development planning



for any region or sub-region should be approached.

2. **Bundelkhand, Uttar Pradesh, a particularly suitable sub-region for alternative plan.**

Understandably the need for alternative planning is most strongly and immediately felt in those regions where high levels of poverty and environmental degradation are clearly visible. Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh is one such region. Historical, cultural and geographical factors have provided an identity to Bundelkhand region which is presently included in two states of India (Uttar Pradesh or UP and Madhya Pradesh). The part of Bundelkhand region included in each of these two states may therefore be referred to as a sub-region.

As is evident from the profile of Bundelkhand region, U.P. presented in section IV, this region is suffering from extreme levels of poverty and degradation of environment at the same time. On the one hand, natural resources which can provide sustainable livelihoods to people are being plundered and ravaged to yield big profits to a few; on the other hand, people are being forced to migrate for several months every year to far-away areas in search of uncertain sustenance. This is most glaringly evident in the case of minor minerals which this region has in abundance and which can play a major role in providing livelihood to people in some parts of this sub-region.

Forests have been depleted in many places. There are many stories of reckless plunder for the enrichment of a small number of powerful persons, including dacoits. Elsewhere in the name of conservation, forests are being fenced off from people who have traditionally depended on them for livelihood.



A major paradox is that the region abounds in many rivers and records adequate rainfall, yet vast area face frequent water scarcity. To add to the paradox some highly destructive floods have ravaged this region in recent times.

In these circumstances there is a growing feeling that something is seriously wrong with the way things are going. In particular natural resources are clearly not being used in ways which are conducive for sustainable livelihoods. Hence the need to think along lines of alternative planning.

Bundelkhand has been generally regarded as a backward area of Uttar Pradesh while Western Uttar Pradesh was regarded as the developed part of Uttar Pradesh.

Bundelkhand played a very important role in the 1857 uprising against colonial rule. Consequently it also suffered more discrimination and deprivation at the hands of colonial rulers.

The intensive agricultural development strategy in the green revolution phase favoured those areas which were already well-endowed. Hence Western Uttar Pradesh got more resources for agricultural development under this strategy.

This led to a situation in which the development experience of Western U.P. (or its neighbouring areas in Haryana) was held forward as a model for Bundelkhand. If Western U.P. had more tubewells, so must Bundelkhand. If Western UP agriculture emphasised the spread of HYVs, based on chemical fertilisers and pesticides, so must Bundelkhand. Such an approach led to a neglect of region-specific needs and potential of Bundelkhand. In the state-level planning, very inadequate attention was given to preparing regional plans for Bundelkhand which could do justice to the prob-



lems as well as potential of this region.

This aspect should be kept in mind while formulating alternative development strategies for Bundelkhand.

### **3. What are the broad aims of an alternative plan?**

These need to be articulated clearly keeping in view the priorities on which there is near unanimity - priorities such as reduction of poverty, sustainability of livelihoods based on protection of environment, equality of women, welfare of other forms of life and social harmony.

1. In economic development the most important aim should be reduction of poverty. Ideally all people should be in a position to meet their basic needs. Starting from a high level of poverty, we should be looking for a development framework in which percentage of people who can meet their basic needs rises steadily. In other words, trickle-down approach to reducing poverty is rejected in favour of a more direct approach to reducing poverty.
2. Protection of environment in the form particularly of protection of farmland, pastures, forests, water-sources and air is the key to the sustenance of life and livelihood. The need for this has increased further in these times of climate change and global warming.
3. All forms of injustice against women should be removed and women should be accepted as equal partners in the quest for creating a better world.
4. All caste or religion based injustice and discrimination should be removed. Conditions of social harmony should exist in which people of all castes and religions feel secure and capable of realising their potential to create a better world.



5. There should be concern for welfare of all forms of life, wild animals, farm animals, in fact all forms of life should be cared for.

#### **4. A profile of Bundelkhand, Uttar Pradesh (B-U sub region),**

(Bundelkhand region included in Uttar Pradesh is the subject of this document. Henceforth it is sometimes referred to in this document as B-U sub-region or simply B-U)

The Bundelkhand region's mythology and history are full of inspiring stories. Its pilgrimages and temples as well as tanks and other traditional water sources serve as reminders of the days when people felt inspired to create great works of art as well as utility.

The reality of today, however, is very grim. Bundelkhand provides one of the widest stretches of districts which are generally included among the most backward districts of India. The sufferings of the weaker section in many parts of the region appear to be increasing due partly to the deteriorating environmental conditions and partly the increasing dominance of criminals and dacoits. Life for most people of all sections appears to have more tensions and stress.

Bundelkhand is spread over about 69,000 sq. km. of land in seven districts of Uttar Pradesh (Chitrakut, Banda, Jhansi, Jalaun, Hamirpur, Mahoba and Lalitpur) and six districts of Madhya Pradesh (Chhatarpur, Tikamgarh, Damoh, Sagar, Datia and Panna). Out of the total population of about 14.5 million, about 7.8 million live in the roughly 29,000 sq. km. area of Uttar Pradesh, while about 6.7 million people live in the roughly 40,000 sq. km. area of Madhya Pradesh. Clearly the Uttar Pradesh side is more densely populated. Leaving aside Jhansi, in all districts over 70 per cent of the



people live in rural areas, the percentage going over 80 per cent in a few districts.

In recent years this region has been appearing in national level news mostly for wrong reasons. Intense heat leading to the sudden death of several local people in Banda and pilgrims in Chitrakut, acute drought distress including starvation deaths involving particularly the Sahariya community, numerous cases of acute exploitation and land grabbing from Kol tribals, and the killings and abductions by the dacoit gangs, particularly the biggest one in Chitrakut, which continues to enjoy very good political connections despite killing dozens of persons.

These distressing headlines, however, reflect only the sporadic outburst of the deeper social malaise which the common people experience in the form of deepening distress and increasing stress in their everyday life. As is often the case, the heaviest burden falls on the already overburdened shoulders of the weaker sections.

A significant part of Bundelkhand is covered by hills and plateaus. Rainwater has the capacity to cause heavy erosion of soil as it moves rapidly towards the numerous rivers and streams (such as Ken, Betwa, Tons, Dhasan and Paisyuni) which merge ultimately into the Yamuna river. As long as hills had good forest cover, the erosion could be checked. People also learnt ingenious ways of collecting water as it emerged from the hills in carefully constructed tanks (in some places a chain of tanks which were linked to each other in such a way that the excess flow of one tank could be absorbed by the next one).

During colonial times the commercial plunder of forests led to their rapid destruction and hence an increase in



soil erosion. This trend continued unabated after independence as local powerful persons found the plunder of forests to be one of the quickest ways of getting rich. At the same time there was neglect of traditional water conservation as the government as well as aid agencies had more confidence in the modern technology of handpumps and tubewells.

However, granites encountered after a little depth at many places of Bundelkhand made it difficult to rely on ground water—except in such cases where the substantial ground water trapped in joints and fissures of granites and rocks could be tapped. Keeping in view the limited supply of ground water that could be obtained at most places, handpumps and tubewells were either not successful, or else caused a rapid drying up of ordinary wells used by other people, mostly poorer people.

As forests disappeared in the hills and elsewhere, the possibilities of rain water being conserved below the ground decreased, and as traditional tanks were neglected, the possibilities of surface conservation decreased. This is the background in which water scarcity become acute in many villages despite the increased spending on water schemes. Deforested hills radiated more and more heat, increasing the misery of this thirsty land and its people. At the same time, as most of the rainwater quickly found its way towards rivers, carrying with it the soil of deforested slopes, the incidence and ferocity of floods increased. Heavy soil erosion led to the large scale formation of ravines in some areas, destroying the land and livelihood of many people, threatening the very existence of many villages.

Mining contractors contributed further to this destruction by their indiscriminate practices including large-scale blasting at several places. This destructive mining ravaged



both ground water and the surface water, fields and forests, apart from exposing many places to dust related diseases.

Workers who toiled at mining sites or in forests got less than the legal minimum wages despite being exposed to severe risks of disease and injury. After the forest corporation was created, tribals looked up to it for bringing relief from the oppressor contractors but the corporation also functioned frequently on narrow commercial lines. In places like Chitrakut the forest corporation sometime illegally deprived the workers of their dues to pay tribute to the biggest dacoit gang of the area. Although, thanks partly to social activists and helpful orders from courts, earnings of some minor forest produce collectors have improved, on the whole the forest produce collectors do not get a fair price for their labour in forests. The conditions of mine and quarry workers in even worse, both in terms of earnings and health risks.

In recent decades a small number of rich and influential families have managed to corner a major share of the earnings from the forests and mines. Of course a significant part of the loot was shared with politicians and officials, but in many parts of Bundelkhand a part of the booty also goes regularly to dacoit gangs. Senior politicians go to attend social celebrations in the families of leading dacoits, and of course seek their 'blessings' to win elections in return for offering them protection.

In the case of agricultural land also some of the richest families, including feudal landlords, have been regularly grabbing the land of the weaker sections. In several instances they first allowed the new allottees adequate time to clear rocks from bad quality land and then grabbed the land just when it was ready for cultivation.

Clearly there is a crying need for redistributing the land



and rearranging the forest and mining work so that those who toil the hardest on land are able to get satisfactory and stable livelihood. Such a redistribution effort will strengthen the most deprived sections—tribal communities such as Kols and Sahariyas as well as other sections of Dalits. Apart from helping to reduce the poverty and deprivation of the most vulnerable sections, this can also prove immensely helpful in the task of environment regeneration.

The topography of Bundelkhand includes fertile plains around rivers, ravines as well as significant stretches of plateaus and hilly land. The different needs of these categories of land should be kept in mind in any planning for this area.

### Statistical Profile of B-U sub region

Table-1

(Source Uttranchal and Uttar Pradesh At a Glance 2003)

S.No.	District/Division	Population	Density Person/Sq. Km.	Sex Ratio (year 2001) Females/1000 male
1.	Banda	1,500,253	340	860
2.	Chitrakut	800,592	250	872
3.	Hamirpur	1,042,374	241	852
4.	Mahoba	708,831	249	866
<b>Chitrakut Division</b>		<b>4,052,050</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>861</b>
1.	Jalaun	1,455,859	319	847
2.	Jhansi	1,746,715	348	870
3.	Lalitpur	977,447	194	884
<b>Jhansi Division</b>		<b>4,180,021</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>865</b>



**Table-2 land Use (Area in sq. km.)**

S.No.	District/Division	Forest	Culturable Wasteland	Net Area Sown
1.	Banda	7332	11337	350629
2.	Chitrakut	47439	23628	161821
3.	Hamirpur	23520	5675	325422
4.	Mahoba	14826	12710	217912
<b>Chitrakut Division</b>		<b>93117</b>	<b>53350</b>	<b>1055784</b>
1.	Jalaun	25640	4215	348028
2.	Jhansi	34358	17681	349267
3.	Lalitpur	76617	81598	252938
<b>Jhansi Division</b>		<b>136615</b>	<b>103494</b>	<b>950233</b>

**Table-3 Literacy (2001)**

S.No.	District/Division	Literacy Total	Literacy Males	Literacy Females
1.	Banda	54.84	69.89	37.1
2.	Chitrakut	66.06	78.75	51.28
3.	Hamirpur	58.1	72.76	40.65
4.	Mahoba	54.23	66.83	39.57
<b>Chitrakut Division</b>		<b>57.76</b>	<b>71.82</b>	<b>41.22</b>
1.	Jalaun	66.14	79.14	50.66
2.	Jhansi	66.69	80.11	51.21
3.	Lalitpur	49.93	64.45	33.25
<b>Jhansi Division</b>		<b>62.74</b>	<b>76.28</b>	<b>46.97</b>



<b>Small &amp; Marginal Farmers</b> (Source : Statistical Diary U.P.)				
S.No.	District	Total Holdings (In Thousand)	Marginal Farmers (less than 1 Ha)	Small Farmers (1-2 Ha)
1.	Jalaun	217	115	47
2.	Jhansi	208	100	54
3.	Lalitpur	156	59	55
4.	Hamirpur	168	77	39
5.	Mahoba	129	61	31
6.	Banda & Chitrakut	365	212	74

## 5. **Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Land Reforms and Farm Workers**

From the perspective of poverty alleviation, it is important to plan an agricultural development strategy which makes it possible for more food to be grown on the fields of poor farmers. Efforts to maintain an adequate level of farm productivity should be linked to land reforms which make available more land to the landless and marginal peasants. Several studies indicate that small peasants work hard and make extra effort to raise yields.

In Bundelkhand real land inequalities are greater than what is indicated by land records. A lot of land that is either supposed to be in the possession of weaker sections or else is shown as a part of the village commons has actually been encroached by big landowners. There are a large number of landless families who have been given land on paper but due to several reasons have not been able to occupy this land. There are several allottees (tarseem bataa) who do not know exactly which plot of land was allotted to them. Such allottees work hard to make a plot of land cultivable



only to be told later that this is not their land and they have to shift to another piece of land. Some unfortunate persons spend a good part of their land trying to reclaim several plots of land without being able to claim any land as their own for a long time. There are uncertainties regarding certain other Category 6 land and Matroom land.

The scope for redistribution of ceiling land has not been explored properly. It should be possible to identify and distribute much more surplus land, but this work has been neglected. There is much scope also for benefiting several landless families by proper distribution of Bhoodan land. Yet another source of land for the poor can be the land which is temporarily vacated by receding reservoir water.

By ensuring that patta allottees are actually able to cultivate the land and by tapping numerous sources of land which can be given to the poor for cultivation, it should be possible to provide food security to a very large number of poor families. In addition the benefits of soil and water conservation and irrigation should be made available to these small peasants with a low-resource base on a priority basis. This should get top priority in land development work.

A constant source of tension for many poor peasants is that the land being tilled by them is claimed by the forest dept. as its own and so they are threatened with eviction. Many such evictions have already taken place. As a bill for land and other rights of tribals is likely to be passed soon, it is being hoped that this problem will be sorted out to a large extent but actually the situation is more complex. Many tribal communities of BU such as Kols and Sahariyas have not yet been accepted in official records as scheduled tribes. Hence benefits extended to scheduled tribes may not be available



to them. In addition some of them belong to other communities. In some cases this land was given to them by the revenue department only a few years back, and just when they had made it cultivable by their hard work they are being asked to give up this land. In all such cases a just solution based on protecting the livelihood of people should be found.

In some cases at the time of land consolidation work (chakbandi work) the better quality land of poor peasants has been exchanged with inferior quality land of influential persons. This needs to be checked. Consolidation of holdings has been marred by so many irregularities that in future this should be continued only if adequate safeguards for the weak and the poor can be provided.

Despite these numerous problems, the example set by the ABSSS in Manikpur block of Chitrakut district shows how sustained effort over several years can succeed in significant land benefits for the poorest sections and release/rehabilitation of many bonded workers.

Thousands of farmer families have been displaced by projects which either did not yield expected benefits (as in the case of several dams in Chitrakut district) or else did not materialise at all (as in the case of Bargarh glass factory). Dam evictees in Lalitpur district (such as evictees of Rajghat project) were not rehabilitated properly. Now many farmers are threatened with displacement by the Ken-Betwa river link project. In future care should be taken that displacement of farmers on a large scale is avoided as far as possible, particularly from fertile farming areas, but if some displacement is unavoidable then satisfactory rehabilitation including alternative land should be arranged. Recent media reports have said that there are plans to take back some of the land



earlier given to people displaced by projects like dams and industries. If this is true then this is clearly unjust and the government should take back this decision.

Farm technology should be in tune with the low resource base of the most farmers and their inability to make big investments particularly in increasingly uncertain weather conditions. While credit at low interest rates should be made available to farmers (in particular compound interest should not be charged), the trend towards encouraging farmers to borrow for non-productive purposes should be discouraged. In particular the auction of farmers' land for non-payment of dues should be firmly banned.

The tendency for equating agricultural progress with the spread of crop varieties which respond better to higher doses of chemical fertilisers should be given up. On the other hand the potential for obtaining good yields using local resources such as compost, neem or other plant-based pesticides should be explored as much as possible. The growing market for organically grown farm produce should be tapped to obtain good returns for farmers.

The base for less expensive and reasonably well yielding farming practices can be created by moisture and water conservation, increasing green cover and strengthening animal husbandry. Once such a base is available, even small holdings of one or two areas can provide a satisfactory source of livelihood. Innovative use of even small plots of land to combine agriculture with horticulture, herbs and farm-forestry has given encouraging results.

Food security and self-reliance should remain the leading concern in guiding the selection of crops. Traditional crop rotations which help to maintain the fertility of land should



be respected.

A situation is emerging when several new crops, varieties or rotations may be introduced with or without contract farming type arrangements. In such a situation it is necessary that farming communities should discuss the criteria on the basis of which any changes in time honoured crop-rotations should be made. How assured are the returns on new crops? Do these crops involve expensive/untried technology? Above all, what will be the impact of new crops/rotations on land fertility and water table? In addition it is necessary that agencies advocating new crop rotations should be transparent and accountable regarding the authenticity of the information provided by them.

BU has pockets of land known for crops of special quality and flavour. For example parts of Jhansi district were known for the quality of turmeric, ginger and arbi grown here. Parts of Mahoba district were famous throughout the country for the high quality of paan grown here. The Kathia variety of wheat grown in some parts is famous for its flavour and particularly for the quality of dalia made from this wheat. Other parts are famous for scented rice varieties like Tulsi Bhog, Kala Sudanas and Ram Bhog. Some other parts are famous for special quality of groundnuts. Singhara has been grown in abundance around ponds and tanks.

All these are in decline due to a complex of reasons. But efforts should be made to protect and promote these special crops or crop-varieties for which parts of BU offer conducive natural conditions.

There are other important but neglected crops which can be grown in adverse conditions - Pasahi paddy or wild paddy, Savan and Kakun which can be ready for harvesting

in sixty days or Kodon. These crops have a role particularly in providing some food security to poor families in difficult times. Pulse and oilseed crops (dalhan and tilhan) should have an important role in agriculture here.

Overall there is a strong need for protecting traditional seeds and crop varieties, which can provide the base for organic farming based on local resources and skills.

In most parts of BU male farm workers get a wage of Rs. 40 to 50 while women get a wage of Rs. 25-30. In a few villages wage may still be as low as one and a quarter kgs. of grain in a day. In some villages the system of bonded labour still exists in agriculture. Firm action should be taken for the release and rehabilitation of bonded workers. Legal minimum wages for farm workers should be implemented particularly on large farms with a better paying capacity. Labour displacing mechanisation of farm work should be discouraged. In particular any attempt to mechanise crop harvesting work should be banned as landless farm workers get their main chance to get better earning in harvesting work. The legal rights of equal wage for women workers should be enforced.

Increasing green cover along with water and moisture conservation can also create conducive conditions for the progress of animal husbandry with special emphasis on cows and bullocks to increase milk production as well as draught power. This area is known for several famous bullock breeds such as Ajaygrahi (light weight) and anipur (heavy). Some areas like Patha also host nomadic pastorales from Rajasthan who are reputed to be good breeders of animals.

Despite the potential for dairying a well-organised infrastructure to procure milk and milk products from farmers at a



remunerative price does not exist here. This potential should be tapped with provision for local, village-based processing of milk. In addition goat and sheep rearing based on local breeds can be promoted in areas suitable for this.

This region has well-developed, huge rice-milling centres in Atarra and (to a lesser extent) in Khurhand. The strength should be maintained but also modified to ensure that the processing of staple food preserves food nutrients to the maximum extent. For example, excessive polishing of rice should be avoided.

Anna-pratha or the system of leaving loose farm animals has been frequently criticised for its harmful impact on agriculture. Community solutions to such problems should be found after a careful consideration of all aspects (instead of solutions imposed from above and forced on people).

If there is integrated planning for all the minor or non-timber forest produce, then near well-forested areas collection of various kinds of produce in different seasons can provide some income for the greater part of the year.

Planning for sustainable forest-based livelihoods should include not only the existing natural forests but should also include new tree-growth in and around villages -the result of successful afforestation work.

A key to the development of this region and in particular to improving livelihood prospects of vulnerable people is to protect forests and increase green cover. Livelihood protection policy and protection of forests are closely inter-related, but in addition efforts should be made to increase public consciousness about long-term interests and the great importance of forests for sustainable livelihoods. It is a challenge to improve the existing precarious livelihood is such a

way that poor people instead of depending on selling firewood are able to earn equal or more income from protection of forest and wild life.

## 6 . Water, Rivers

Bundelkhand has a very rich tradition of constructing tanks in a highly skilled way. Examples can be seen in Mahoba and Charkhari and numerous other places. Unfortunately, many of these have been badly depleted or damaged due to encroachment and lack of maintenance. Many dam projects created in recent decades (such as Maro and Bardaha in Chitrakut district) have proved to be a failure. Today there is a real need for assessing priorities properly so that scarce funds can be used to the best advantage of people. All available evidence suggests that the first priority should be accorded to the proper maintenance and repair (including clearing encroachments) in the case of all existing tanks and related structures which can still be salvaged. This should be done with the involvement of local people as a people's movement. Similarly new sites should be selected for the construction of new tanks wherever possible. Maintenance of tanks used to be very much a part of the culture and traditions of these villages. An attempt to revive this should be made while at the same time making full use of the government's schemes and funds which can be utilised for this purpose. (See Annexure 1)

Many village ponds and tanks have the potential of fisheries. Care should be taken to prioritise the poorest, most left-out rural households to benefit from these instead of leaving these tanks to the highest bidders.

The concept of watershed development includes a multi-disciplinary approach in which repair and construction



of tanks, construction of check dams, soil and water-conservation, and planting of trees are combined with social mobilisation of villagers, particularly weaker sections and women and micro-finance to promote balanced development in villages. Such an example can be seen in Tikariya panchayat area of Chitrakut district. This work is very conducive for the development of BU and should be promoted in a big way. (However at the time of prolonged droughts even the performance of these very well executed projects can be adversely affected.) (See Annexure 2)

Recently the government has made available a lot of funds for the Ken-Betwa river link scheme while the repair and maintenance of many invaluable tanks is neglected. This project involves two rivers, the Ken and the Betwa both of which arise in Madhya Pradesh. These then flow across several districts of this state as well as Uttar Pradesh to finally merge in Yamuna river at two different points. Several dams have already been built or are under construction on both of these rivers such as Matateela and Rajghat (on Betwa) and Gangau (on the Ken). Some of these have been controversial for various reasons such as high siltation rate, unjust displacement of people or sudden large-scale release of water causing destructive flash floods.

The Ken-Betwa project consists mainly of a new dam 73 metre high upper Gangau and a 250 km canal to link the two rivers, transferring water from Ken river to Betwa river. However people in the Ken river areas as well as some independent experts question the main assumption on which this project is based - the existence of surplus water in Ken.

The government says that displacement will be limited but people point out that already estimates of to - be dis-

placed people are rising much above earlier estimates and all direct and indirect displacement due to dam and link-canal etc. should be added together to reach a realistic estimate. A part of Panna tiger reserve and a larger forest zone will also be submerged by this project.

Local people also argue that the problems relating to many previously constructed projects on these rivers should be tackled first. Gaya Prasad Gopal, a senior social activist of this area, was closely involved in the relief work for two massive floods caused by the sudden release of water from dams. He cannot forget the destruction caused by these floods. "We should first try to correct the existing system so that such tragedies are not repeated in future."

At a 'Water Parliament' of Bundelkhand region many speakers including social/environment activists and independent experts expressed concerns that this project can worsen the water scarcity in some areas and floods/waterlogging in other areas. A resolution passed at the end of this water assembly (held in Orchha, district Tikamgarh) said that lakhs of people in both Ken and Betwa river areas will be exposed to unprecedented tragic consequences as a result of this project. This resolution then called upon the Government of India to abandon this project.

It is tragic that massive funds are sanctioned all too readily for projects of dubious merit while smaller demands for highly useful repair and maintenance of tanks are neglected. Clearly there is a big need for correcting priorities, or else the cycle of floods and droughts may worsen.

Sudden release of massive quantities of water from dams has caused destructive flash floods in recent years in Chitrakut, Banda and Jalaun districts. Dam management and



maintenance need to be improved to avoid such tragedies. Indiscriminate mining of sand on river beds has also led to increased threat of floods in many critical areas - such as the increased threat of Ken river floods to Banda town.

Severe water erosion is speeding up the formation of ravine in many areas. Even highly fertile area such as Konch (in Jalaun district) now face this threat. Prevention of ravine formation and reclamation of land where possible should get more attention.

## **7. Forests and Horticulture**

Several forested parts of BU are capable of providing sustainable forest based livelihood to a large number of villagers on the basis of the collection of a wide range of minor forest produce including anvla, chiranunji, mahua, tendu leaf, seasonal fruits and vegetables and herbs, medicinal plants and honey. If families engaged in minor forest produce collection can also process some of the produce (for example make anvla powder or candy), their income can increase substantially. However the potential of sustainable livelihoods is badly impeded by several factors - such as the restrictions placed on the collection of minor forest produce and inability of collectors to get a fair price. What is worse is that overall prospects for this livelihood are declining with the depletion of forests.

Forestry practices need to be changed to allow free access to collection of minor forest produce, even in protected areas such as Ranipur (subject only to the restriction that sustainability of this livelihood is protected). While collectors and other villagers should be encouraged to take up value adding processing activity, their cooperation should also be obtained for the common cause of protecting forests

without which the livelihood will also collapse. In return for unhindered access to sustainable collection of minor forest produce, villagers, their representatives and organisations should offer full cooperation in protecting forests.

The model being tried out in Baran district of Rajasthan may be mentioned in this context. Here about 50 plots of degraded forest lands have been handed over to villagers comprising mainly Sahariyas and other vulnerable groups traditionally associated with forest-based livelihoods. Here the villagers carry out soil and water conservation work, build a boundary plant, plant trees and herbs. All this is wage-based work but in addition they do a lot of voluntary work to protect trees. In return they've access to all the minor forest produce that can be obtained from this forest. A weakness of this model so far is the absence of long-term assured and inheritable rights to communities. By adding this, a model for regenerating and protecting forests while at the same time promoting forest-based livelihoods of the poorest people can be created.

The main basis of such an effort is (i) Local people, mainly tribals and forest dwellers are closely involved in the regeneration and protection of degraded forests (ii) indigenous tree varieties with good soil and water conservation properties and minor forest produce are emphasised (iii) people get long-term, secure, inheritable rights to collect minor-forest produce as long as they protect forests (iv) wage employment for various protective works is given particularly till such time that new trees have grown enough to yield adequate minor forest produce to provide a secure livelihood to people.

Such initiatives will also reduce the dependence on



selling firewood and thereby contribute further to protecting forests.

Forestry initiatives which protect and regenerate forests while also protecting livelihood are important. The wider role of forests in conserving water and soil, protecting from floods and regulating climate is crucial and should never be neglected.

The potential of minor forest produce is evident from the fact that despite the forest degradation of recent years 500 tons anvla and almost the same quantity of mahuwa are collected in a year from a single block Manikpur. In addition there are higher value products like chiraunji. The earnings from anvla and mahua can also be increased substantially by local value-added processing such a making anvla powder and candy, or jam and jelly from mahua.

There is considerable potential for promoting sericulture. A project initiated in Manikpur block of Chitrakut district gave very good results initially but later became a victim of official apathy. There is a great potential for utilising the raw silk within this region as this region is rich in the human resource of weavers. The famous centre of Chanderi saris is located very near to this region in Madhya Pradesh. Raw silk can also find a good market in the famous silk weaving centre of Varanasi.

Many other artisan activists can be supported by forest produce. Some of the poorest dalit families are known to make brooms, sieves and other daily utility products from bamboos. Khajur trees also provide the raw material for similar products.

The potential of horticulture should be better tapped. The plateau areas are particularly suitable for anvala, lemon,

guava and even oranges. Many other fruits grow well in plains. Lemon in particular has an important role to provide the leading health drink in an area so badly affected by hot weather and heat waves.

Neem tree is very plentiful in this area and with its potential being increasingly recognised for organic pesticides and medicine, neem based livelihood can increase greatly in the near future if tapped properly. Neem oilcake can play an important protective role in agriculture.

This region is known as a rich source of medicinal herbs. Nearly one hundred medicinal herbs have been identified for their potential, not to mention numerous lesser known species. Many people here have a rich knowledge of herbs. These can provide an important source of livelihood apart from playing a role in improving medicare at low cost. Herb gardens such as those created in Tikariys by the ABSSS should be promoted.

Similarly the task of protecting wild life should be taken up with the full cooperation of local villagers. People should not be displaced in the name of protecting wild life.

As stated earlier, land disputes of cultivators with the forest department should be settled on the basis of protecting the livelihood of people. Where it is possible for people to cultivate land, it should be allowed. Where the forest department has to plant trees, this should be done without evicting people on the basis of a partnership so that people become partners in the planting and protection of trees. (See Annexure 3). Hence the forest department's objective of bringing more land under tree cover can be reconciled with the protection of livelihood. Eviction, that has taken place in places like Nihi, Charaiya, Satrohan, Ranipur, Gidurha,



Jaramafi (District Chitrakut), Tindwari and Kolawal (Banda District) should not be allowed.

Daily wages at present in forests are as low as Rs. 35 to 40 per day. The legal minimum wage should be paid.

The main aim should be to reconcile the objectives of protecting and increasing forest cover with the livelihood of tribals and other villagers from weaker sections living near forests. Innovative schemes which provide adequate and long-term rights to tribals while involving them in protection of forests and new planting of indigenous species of trees should be emphasised.

## **8. Mining**

Many parts of this region have vast deposits of minor minerals. Granite, stone chips, stone powder, silica sand and river bank sand are being obtained by indiscriminate mining practices every day in vast quantities. The existing system is such that both the environment and health of workers suffer badly. Workers employed on low wages suffer in large numbers from silicosis, TB, skin diseases and other serious ailments. Most of them lose all strength after a few years' work in these mines and crushers. Many of them die in accidents or even without accidents at a relatively young age. There are many horror stories of workers being maimed or beaten or even killed by mine owners when they protested against their exploitation. On the other hand villagers living near mines complain that their farm land, crops and water-sources are being destroyed by indiscriminate mining, their health too is ruined by exposure to high levels of dust. As some mines go very deep, serious threats of land subsidence, even damage to railway lines and very serious accidents have emerged at some places.

The existing system of operating mines is exactly the opposite of any system of sustainable livelihood. This is nothing but plunder by a few to make as much as possible in the least time. Such a system should change. However a blanket ban on mining as has been imposed in some other regions will cause sudden large-scale unemployment to a large number of workers and this should be avoided.

Instead careful planning should be taken to evolve technologies and processes in which the objectives of non-exploitative employment can be reconciled with the protection of environment. This can take the form of creating cooperatives of workers. A number of mines can be linked to a single crusher. The technology should be such that dust levels and hazards are reduced as much possible. The use of dynamite should be avoided or minimised. More labour intensive methods should be used.

While a ban can be imposed after careful inspection on those mines in which the risk of accident and ecological ruin is unacceptably high or areas of special importance for pilgrims, in other places the effort should be to continue work with emphasis on safety, health, legal wages and environment protection. (See Annexure 4) In areas where a ban on mining at least for some years is unavoidable, care should be taken to employ displaced workers in ecological rehabilitation of the devastated area.

#### **9. Vulnerable Groups, Social Exclusion and the Need For Assertive Role of Dalits and Women**

This area has several vulnerable groups such as kol tribals, Sahariya tribals, Kabutras, Bansors, Bedni and Saperas. A special effort needs to be made to strengthen their rights and improve their socio-economic position. A glar-



ing anomaly is that Kols are recognised as scheduled tribes in neighbouring states like Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh but not in Uttar Pradesh. Due to this reason many benefits and protections could not be extended to them. In Mahoba district (Jaitpur) even innocent Kabutra people were frequently implicated in fake criminal cases due to the stigma of crime unfairly attached to them. This is now changing to some extent but much remains to be done.

Recently a welcome step was taken to recognise the Sahariyas (concentrated in Lalitpur district) as well as other communities like Gonds and Panika as scheduled tribes, but this decision has been implemented so far in such a distorted way that these communities are not able to get their newly-recognised rights as STs while at the same time their old benefits as SCs are being denied to them. During the last panchayat elections, the Sahariyas could not get the benefit of reservations either as SCs or STs.

These vulnerable group include some of the poorest families of this region and special emphasis to protect their rights and interests is needed to prevent their further marginalisation.

It is certainly not enough to give these vulnerable groups a few doles from time to time. Their long-term, sustainable livelihood protection should be based on a just and equitable share in natural resources. Ancestors of some of these groups owned adequate land to meet their food security needs but these were snatched from them. Now this injustice should be reversed and their livelihood should have a firm base in a just share of natural resources. They should get farmland, rights for secure livelihoods based on minor produce and being the weakest section, they should get pri-

ority in getting mining leases as well.

In addition special skills associated with these groups (such as bamboo work in the case of bansors, folk-arts in the case of bednis and snakes in the case of saperas and jogis) should be kept in mind while preparing plans for these groups.

In the case of such communities, traditional livelihood can be improved by providing new opportunities and avenues for old skills and by upgradation of skills. For example, Bansors who mainly made brooms and sieves and other items of daily household for local use should certainly continue to make there but to this can they add other, more attractive bamboo products which can fetch a better price in the urban market. Saperas can be linked to snake parks or other such initiatives where various species of snakes can be protected and in addition snake venom can be obtained (without killing snakes) for various medicinal uses. In the case of Bedinis the song-dance and acrobatics can be linked to tourism circuits in addition to the traditional fairs.

Nomadic groups need a special sympathetic attitude to understand their real needs and act accordingly. This is equally true of groups or tribes to which the stigma of criminal has been attached in a highly unjust way. Child workers need timely help and proper rehabilitation.

As these groups are spread over neighbouring states like Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, there can be co-operation with these states in preparing plans for these groups.

At a broader level, it may be argued that the potential for just and participative development initiatives in this region is greatly hindered by the presence of feudal power-structures in many areas. At one end, we've dominant house-



holds who have had one or more villages in their stranglehold, perhaps for several generations. At the other end are dalits and other marginalised groups who, despite many recent signs of assertiveness, are still unable to stand up to the might of the powerful elites supported all too often by criminals and corrupt officials (police and others). In many areas the most powerful persons in the villages (who may or may not be the traditional elites but strive to have a feudal type stranglehold in village) are helped by their links with criminals and dacoit gangs. Many of these criminals and dacoits function so openly that their link with powerful patrons within the establishment cannot be denied. In fact a leading dacoit gang went so far as to invite applications from local youths to join the gang! Many instances of senior leaders attending wedding parties or other functions hosted by dacoit leaders have been reported.

In this power structure it is difficult for dalits and other weakest sections to protect their land and livelihood rights as well as their dignity. So despite the difficulties and hazards of migration there is a growing tendency to migrate to cities for long periods, particularly in drought-years. A recent report as a part of the pulse-polio campaign in Banda district reported that thousands of houses had been found locked. In addition there are households from where only one or two members (mainly males) have migrated.

This means that an increasing number of poor are not just able to stay long enough in the village to improve their prospects of sustainable livelihoods within the village. The recently introduced rural employment guarantee scheme provides good opportunities for soil and water conservation work as well as land-improvement and bunding on the fields of poor peasants. But when these families are not in the

village at all, their prospects of benefiting from such schemes are minimal.

Women in poor as well as well-to-do families suffer from discrimination and hidden domestic violence. Child marriages and purdah system still persist while dowry system is actually worsening, (while at the same time there is a tendency to misuse some of the provisions of anti-dowry laws). With the overall rise in crime, women in any case feel less secure than before. Despite the existence of new opportunities for a wider social role of women (for instance as a result of the 33% reservation for seats for women in panchayat raj institutions), women are nevertheless denied opportunities to have their priorities included in development planning and overall to play an adequate role in new development initiatives. This denial of opportunities to women and to weaker sections is a serious obstacle that hinders social change and development initiatives based on justice and equality. Thus empowering women, dalits and various vulnerable groups should be seen as an essential part of any new development initiatives.

## **10 . Crafts, Artisans and Industry**

BU sub-region has a number of specialised crafts (such as wood toys and silver fish) for which particular areas are known. While these need to be encouraged and promoted, the livelihood potential is even higher in more routine artisan work such as weaving, oil-milling, carpentry, leather-work etc. Unfortunately all these are in decline, but potential for revival exists. Reviving village artisan work should be emphasised. On the other hand polluting industries which harm farming and water sources should be discouraged. Taking advantage of the proximity of Chanderi and Varanasi weav-



ing centres, both sericulture and weaving based on it can be promoted. Artisan work based on bamboo and trees (such as Khajur) to make utility items like brooms and sieves should get more help. Skill upgradation in this and other such traditional items can lead to new items of production and higher income.

Unfortunately the reverse appears to be the case judging from what we noticed during a recent field-visit to Mahoba district. The famous khadi weaving centre of Jaitpur was in ruin as anti-social elements had captured the co-ordinating unit (Gandhi ashram), milking it for private profits while the livelihood of about 7000 weavers was destroyed. (See Annexure 5) On the other hand near Naugaon, health and livelihoods were being ruined by a liquor factory.

Such a distorted industrial policy should change in favour of environment-friendly, employment intensive work.

At present the BHEL (Bharat Heavy Electricals) plant in Jhansi appears to be the only major public sector undertaking in this entire region. In Bargarh (district Chitrakut) land was acquired for a major glass unit, based on local silica sand deposits, but the project was never implemented. Thus people lost their land and yet no new employment opportunities were created. If Bargarh glass unit and one or two more major employment intensive public sector undertakings can be taken up, while taking care to minimise social and environmental costs, this will be in keeping with the policy of balanced regional development.

## **11. Livelihoods Linked to Tourism**

Particularly after the creation of Uttaranchal, Bundelkhand is frequently seen as the main tourism centre for Uttar Pradesh. Apart from the most famous pilgrimage of

Chitrakut, Bundelkhand has the famous Jain temples of Lalitpur and the equally famous forts of Jhansi, Kalinjar and Mahoba. Utilitarian and beautification aims can be combined in the rejuvenation of several water sources such as Ganesh Bavli and Ramnagar Ka Talab and the huge neglected tanks of Mahoba. Kalinjar is seen mainly as a fort but its water conservation system is also worth learning from. Chitrakut is seen mainly as a pilgrimage centre but in addition to its well-known pilgrimage spots like Parikrama and Gupt Godavri it has many neglected beautiful spots including great waterfalls such as Shabri Prapat, Bedhak and Rashiyan which can become beautiful tourism centres. Beautification of Mandakini river bank and confluence places of rivers (such as the confluence of Yamuna and Betwa rivers in Hamirpur district) can also be very productive. Close cooperation with Madhya Pradesh can result in some attractive tourism circuits such as by linking some of the above mentioned attractions with the famous Khajuraho temples of Chhattarpur. Development of Chitrakut also involves close cooperation of these two state governments. A tourism circuit can also be created around the events of 1857 particularly the brave exploits of the legendary Jhansi Ki Rani.

The key issue here is to link livelihoods of local people, particularly the poor, with the traditional fairs and festivals, as well as the emerging new tourism circuits. The Amavasya fairs in Chitrakut can attract people to the extent of 3 lakh to 3 million. Poor communities can be encouraged to market crafts (particularly stone-work of mythological significance) as well as products based on minor forest produce and processing of farm produce. Big traders tend to get the main benefits of such opportunities but there is no reason why groups of rural poor should not benefit from such opportuni-



ties. Some villages near tourism circuits can be equipped better to benefit from tourism.

## **12. Integrated Planning For A Resource Base For Weaker Sections**

It is important that all weaker sections should have a resource base to support their livelihood. All of them should of course have homestead land with full legal rights and as far as possible enough open space for kitchen gardens. But in addition efforts should be made to provide some land - preferably at least one hectare of land - to all poor families. Those families which have less land should have better access to other resources. So there is a strong case for mining leases to be given to cooperatives of rural poor. Forest resources should be used to benefit only the rural poor with special emphasis on tribals. In other words there should be integrated planning of natural resources to support livelihoods so that no one is deprived and all are able to meet their basic needs on a sustainable basis.

Bundelkhand is passing through critical times when large-scale ecological ruin and exploitative relationships pose a serious threat to the livelihood of common people. In such a situation this region badly needs policies which emphasise the protection of livelihoods of weaker sections based on the protection of environment. This includes allocation of higher government resources for realising this aim as well as creating a conducive situation in which common people feel highly motivated to work for the same aim. Existing policies on water, forests, mining and agriculture frequently fail to meet this objective and instead serve narrow vested interests.

A challenge before voluntary organisations and social

activists is to create a strong public opinion in favour of policy initiatives which can combine protection of environment and sustainable livelihoods. Watershed plans can be prepared which combine land reforms, micro-finance, water-harvesting, afforestation, soil and water conservation and social reform with mobilisation of people, particularly weaker sections and women. These plans should combine more equal distribution of land with livelihood based on minor forest produce, eco-friendly mining, animal husbandry and fishing in such a way that the poorest people can improve their sustainable livelihood prospects on the basis of a just use of natural resources. In this resource-use planning, those who have the least farmland not only get at least some land but are promised more income from forests, minerals, ponds and other resources. The preparation and implementation of such plans even for a few watersheds can inspire the poor to strive for wider change. On the one hand small peasants need to be protected by encouraging farming systems and technologies which are favourable to small farmers. On the other hand more landless peasants should be helped to become small farmers. The livelihood base of all of them should be diversified to include - depending on local resource situation - work based on forests, mining, crafts, etc.

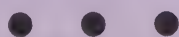
### **13. Education, Health and Social Reform**

The agenda for improving sustainable livelihoods outlined above cannot be achieved without badly needed improvements in other important areas including education, health and people's mobilisation for social reform. The state of school education at present is extremely distressing, both in terms of high drop-out rate and the poor quality of education. School education has to be improved drastically in terms of mobilising higher resources as well linking education to



the real needs of society. Health care for weaker sections including the majority of villagers is extremely poor. This has increased the sufferings of people and also contributed to the indebtedness and economic distress by pushing them towards expensive private treatment. Significantly improved public health facilities are a must.

Above all, any people centred path of development cannot be thought of in isolation from the involvement and enthusiasm of people as well as the strength of their character. The alternative strategy of development outlined above cannot be implemented in conditions (such as exist today in many villages) where use of liquor and intoxicants is increasing, disputes among villagers are rising, social evils like dowry and gambling are spreading fast. There has to be a people's involvement for fighting social evils, for character building and for mobilising people for important development initiatives which can only succeed with their genuine involvement and participation.



### Annexure-1

## **Many Dying Water Bodies Can Get A New Lease of Life**

In 2005 the Cabinet cleared a Rs. 3 billion national project for the repair, renovation and restoration of water bodies such as tanks and wells. The Centre will contribute 75 percent of the funds, while various state governments will provide the remaining 25 per cent. The project hopes to recover the lost irrigation potential of these sources within a period of seven to ten years.

In some places people have already been making an effort to take good care of traditional water sources, some of which were created several hundred years ago. For example the tank and open wells near Ganesh Bawli near the famous pilgrimage centre of Chitrakut are still being used by farmers of a nearby village.

However some of the damage is not easy for villagers to take up on their own, and this is where the assistance to be provided under the newly approved project may make an important contribution in giving a new lease of life to several endangered water bodies.

Some water bodies have deteriorated to such an extent that now there is hardly hope of saving or retrieving them.

In a hotel in Banda town (Uttar Pradesh), I was interviewing a local social activist Avadhesh Gautam about the traditional water resources of this region when he surprised me by saying - "Just now you are drinking a cup of tea sitting in a water tank."

He meant a former water tank of course and he was right. As he explained, Diggi water tank which existed here had been filled up for building a hotel and other buildings on this land.

In such cases it would be foolish to try to retrieve the lost water body, but there are many other examples where relatively low budgets can help to save threatened water bodies.

A voluntary organisation A.B.S.S. Sansthan recently implemented a watershed project in Tikariya panchayat of Chitrakut (U.P.) district. As a part of this project, they renovated two water tanks which badly needed cleaning and re-



pairs. As a result, newly irrigated fields near these tanks have experienced a sharp rise in yield.

Maya, a social activist for several years with this organisation, says, "When serious water shortages develop in this drought prone area, it is a traditional water source called Raja Ka Talab which comes to the help of thirsty people. People in a radius of 5 to 6 kms. continue to use the water of this tank for various purposes, and often they use bullock carts to fetch water from here. The nearly hundred years old tank is still very useful. However if the government takes up cleaning and repair work its utility can increase further."

In Banda I met Dr. L.P. Chaurasia, a senior geologist and an expert on the water problems of this area. He told me, "Wherever I've seen bawlis I've noticed that these may be badly damaged but water is still available in them. So these are very useful for water scarce villages. Similarly tanks are extremely useful, both for collecting water and for recharge."

Keeping in view the immense potential of these traditional water sources, it is really tragic to see to what extent some once glorious water bodies have been allowed to deteriorate. For instance in Kandhar tank of Banda it is still possible to see old structures which indicate that once it must have been a very good tank. But now there was no water in the tank. On one side some children were playing cricket. On another side a drain was emptying sewage.

Clearly, therefore, the recently announced national scheme for the renovation of water bodies was badly needed, particularly for areas like Chitrakut - Banda where traditional water sources like tanks still have the potential to be a very important source of water. Infact there are so many of these

water bodies requiring repair and cleaning that a second and third stage of this scheme may be eventually needed.

While renovating those water bodies where such work is still possible, it is also important to prevent other water bodies from encroachments, particularly commercial interests. Already several water bodies have been lost beyond the stage of reclamation because of large scale encroachment. Unless strict guidelines to prevent future encroachments are issued and followed, much of the gains of the new scheme may be lost.



## Annexure-2

# **Thirsty Patha Places Its Hopes in Rain Harvesting**

Gopipur village (Manikpur block of Chitrakut district, U.P.) has no shortage of wells and handpumps - the only problem is that most of these do not provide any water to the thirsty people of Gopipur when they need this the most. It is the first week of May and Nathu Yadav says, "Already most of the wells in our village are dry and hand pumps yield at best a trickle. I shudder to think of the next two months."

In these difficult times a well built around a small natural source of water (chauhra) has provided a big relief to the over 1500 people of this village. This well is located at a distance of about one and a half kms from the main settlement. A family which owns a bullock cart is able to fetch one drum of water in three hours. A family which needs three drums of water in one day needs the services of at least one



adult (or two children), besides the bullocks, for nine hours a day just to meet the family's water needs. The poorer families who don't have bullock carts have to fetch water in pitchers and the entire family may have to get involved in fetching water.

Ram Lakhan says, "As the summer advances this well will come under a lot of pressure and as its water is reduced, people will have to wait till the natural source yields enough water to fill the next bucket."

Clearly this well constructed by A.B. Samaj Seva Sansthan (ABSSS in short) a few years back has provided a last resort for villagers affected acutely by water scarcity. The experienced activists of ABSSS realised the potential of the small but perennial water source and erected a well around it. This helped to protect the source and also to collect its water so that villagers could use it better. At many other places similar ingenuity in improving the potential of small natural sources has enabled ABSSS activists to meet the needs of some of the most water scarce hamlets of Patha region.

Patha is a rocky, hilly part of Chitrakut district which has been in news all too often for its water starved villages and hamlets of Kol tribals. There has been no shortage of expensive water supply schemes but their success rate was too low. One reason was corruption. But perhaps an even more important reason for this failure was an ecological one. As long as forests in hills were being destroyed and water table was going down, the newly constructed hand pumps and wells could not prove very useful.

So ABSSS is now concentrating on water harvesting, afforestation, soil and water conservation as well as related work in Tikariya and Paatin water sheds. While the former

work has already yielded encouraging results, the later, even more promising work is still in its early stage.

The Tikariya watershed work was taken up for the government (DRDA) by ABSSS during 1995-2000. In this watershed development old tanks were repaired and a series of new check dams was constructed. The rejuvenation of Pushkarni tank provides a good example of how cost-effective the restoration of traditional water sources can prove. Earlier the tank could not even fulfil the bathing needs of people and drinking water needs of animals during summer season. Now these needs are adequately fulfilled throughout the year and in addition irrigation needs of about a dozen farmers are met. It was a treat to see birds, animals and people together sharing the coolness of this tank in the scorching May afternoon. And such a change which benefited so many people and other forms of life cost only Rs. 85000, less than the construction of two rooms in a city.

A series of five check dams has been constructed in this watershed area, making it possible for hundreds of farmers to obtain irrigation for the first time and raise their yields substantially. It has also been possible to bring earlier uncultivated land under cultivation; overall farm production has increased very considerably.

No less important is the fact that due to the storage of water for a few months, the water table has gone up in surrounding areas. This process has been helped further by other soil and water conservation works including bunding, gully plugs and afforestation. As Dharampal says, "earlier we had to go to Dhonda village to fetch water, now some of our relatives in water-scarce areas want to come here during the summer."



The promise of water harvesting is even higher in Paatin watershed area due to the presence of steep hills over a vast area. Raj Singh, project coordinator of ABSSS explains, "So far we have completed only 10 percent of the work, but already some good results are available in the form of higher moisture retention and improved farm productivity in some patches of land."

The work has started on hills in the form of gully plugs, bunds and trenches. This will help to check the fast flow of water at several points so that the capacity of rainwater to rapidly take soil and stones with it with decrease. Water will remain in trenches for a longer time adding to the overall moisture and raising water table. Tree planting will be taken up after the first rains. This area is already rich in neem trees and demand for neem seeds for making eco-friendly pesticides and other products is increasing.

As Bhagwat, the young dynamic director of ABSSS explains, "Instead of deposing rubble and damaging the fields below, the gentle flow of water will help to raise water table and increase moisture. Apart from improving drinking water availability in many thirsty, water-scarce hamlets, this will also help to increase the prospects of agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry and afforestation." In this way the foundation for sustainable development is established, while the short-term needs of villagers are met by employment in watershed development work."

The work in Paatin water shed, supported by NABARD, has been so cost-effective that 64 gully-plugs could be erected using funds meant for 39 gully plugs. While at the same time the full payment of legal wage was ensured to all workers.

Infact such is the level of transparency maintained in this work that all workers receive a full record of the work done by them and the payment made for this. If they have any doubts, they can get these clarified even later on the basis of the records in their possession. Funds are handed over to the villagers' own committees, and the payments are made by them.

It is this honesty and transparency that has raised a hope among Patha villagers that the results of these water harvesting and watershed development works will truly help to quench the thirst of the land and people of Patha. Paatin watershed (798 hectares) is being followed by the even bigger Ittwa watershed project (1394 hectares). If all goes well, a series of watershed development projects can truly change the face of Patha and its kol tribals known in mythology as the friends and followers of Lord Rama during his years of exile. (This report is based on a field visit in year 2004).



### Annexure-3

## **Tree-Farming To Promote Livelihood and Reduce Conflicts**

In recent years a conflict situation has been created in vast areas of rural India as a result of a clash between the perception of subsistence cultivators and forest departments. These cultivators say that this land is their basic source of livelihood and they can't survive without it. On the other hand the forest department says citing land records that this is legally forest land and it is now needed to plant trees. Cultivators reply in many cases that the land was actually distrib-



uted to them by the revenue department and they have worked hard to make it cultivable.

Legislation to protect rights of tribals is pending in the parliament and it is hoped that this will protect several such small peasants from eviction. But even if all goes well and this law is enacted, it will provide relief to only a part of the subsistence peasants threatened in this way. Only those officially classified as 'scheduled tribes' will be protected. Even among them, those having claims before a stipulated year will be protected.

This still leaves a large number of subsistence peasants in an extremely fragile and precarious situation. Something should be done to protect their livelihood too.

This can be achieved by initiating a scheme of tree-farming for these farmers. As the forest department's main concern is to bring more land under tree cover, it should have no objection to a scheme which achieves this objective while protecting the livelihood of people at the same time.

The main features of such a scheme will be the following :

1. Till such time that the forest department does not intend to start afforestation on this land, existing subsistence farmers will be allowed to continue their subsistence farming without any disturbance.
2. Once an afforestation plan for a site is ready people there will be informed not to plant the next crop. The standing crop will not be harmed in any way.
3. No one will be evicted by force. They will be given an offer by the forest department that they can stay on this land if they agree to become partners in a scheme to

plant and protect trees.

4. In this scheme subsistence farmers will remain on their land but they'll use this land to plant trees instead of agricultural crops. Till the tree growth is small, they can grow some agricultural crop as well, but this will be phased out as trees mature.
5. As long as they agree to plant and protect trees, there families will get legal rights to land. They will have inheritable rights to, use and sell all non-timber forest (including fruits, flowers, leaves etc.) obtained from these trees (and their undergrowth) in a sustainable way.
6. Economic support to plant and protect trees will be provided by the forest department.
7. Till trees reach an age at which non-timber forest produce can be harvested, these families will get adequate economic assistance from forest dept. and from poverty alleviation schemes.
8. These families will give a legal undertaking not to cut any green trees and not to harm wild life in any way. (But of course they'll have the right of self-protection if attacked by wild animals).
9. These families will assist forest officials in any drives against poachers and smugglers to protect wild life as well as to extinguish fires. For any such assistance they'll get some economic compensation.
10. Groups of such families will be helped to form village units. These villages will be entitled to all development and democratic rights which are available to other villages.
11. A family can be evicted if guilty of cutting trees and harm-



ing wild life is firmly established. Eviction will be not just in the hands of officials. Democratic bodies of these forest-villages will have an important say in this.

In this way it is possible to create a system in which afforestation work can proceed rapidly while improving the livelihood prospects of people, not disrupting livelihoods in any way.



#### Annexure-4

## **Mining-Protect Environment As Well As Livelihood**

In vast areas of Rajasthan as well as in some other regions, court orders have led to the closure of a large number of quarries and mines. These include stone quarries as well as mines of some other minor minerals. The main reason for the closure of these mines is that these were causing environmental damage in vulnerable areas.

There is no doubt that environment protection is very important, particularly in states like Rajasthan where water conservation should be the top most priority. It is also true that ecologically destructive mining practices were being pursued in many areas. Thus the court orders to ban mining are a well intentioned response to real problems. It is also true that the ecology of some mineral zones - such as some parts of the Himalayan region - is so fragile that it is better not to disturb rocks and minerals.

While accepting all these considerations of environment protection, it should also be emphasised that in many mineral zones, a complete ban on mining activity also creates

serious problems of loss of livelihood for lakhs of workers who badly need this work. It is true that most of these miners and quarry workers have been badly exploited. But the solution is to check the exploitation and not to stop the work altogether. Let's face the obvious reality that in these difficult times of economic uncertainty, lakhs of workers badly need these jobs.

Therefore banning mining work in most places can be at best only a temporary step. We've to move ahead and initiate steps which can meet both the important objectives of protecting environment and protecting livelihood.

This can be done by forming cooperatives or self help groups of workers which can take up small-scale mining work using eco-friendly methods. As far as possible use of dynamite and big machinery should be banned, particularly in the more fragile zones. To process minerals, the government should promote processing units each one of which will cater to the needs of several small scale mining and quarrying groups.

The government should make available these mining rights to work with a spirit of protecting livelihood and alleviating poverty of weaker sections. Along with rights some responsibilities should be assigned to groups of workers. These include protecting and promoting greenery in nearby areas, disposing the wastes properly and adopting other environmental safeguards.

To facilitate the groups of workers/miners the mining department should share with workers all such technological information as is available with it. The department should also help the workers to gain access to appropriate technology and tools which are suitable for such small-scale work.



At some stage the experiment of handing over a stretch of mineral-zone to workers groups can be considered on ownership basis with the stipulated condition that workers will be responsible for increasing the green cover and protecting the environment of this land.

In a paper 'Small scale mining and resource development,' (published in Appropriate Technology journal). Edmind Bugnosen, a mining adviser based in Britain writes, "As a strategy for mineral resource development, small scale mining is valuable, because compared to large-scale mining it allows better wealth distribution. A thriving small-scale mining industry can offer employment and income to rural people and can enable villagers to remain in their community, complementing agricultural activities and seasonal trades." This paper concludes by saying, "The small scale miner will remain the guardian of our traditional mining practices. He surely deserves our help."

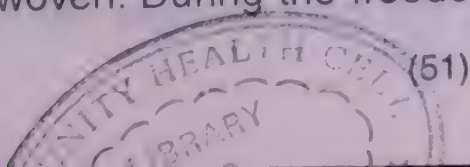


### Annexure-5

## 7000 Khadi Weavers Face Sudden Unemployment

Visitors to Jaitpur (a small town in Mahoba district of Uttar Pradesh) miss the constant hum of handlooms. For nearly 20 months the looms of weavers have been silent here, signalling the sudden unemployment of nearly 7000 weavers in this town and neighbouring villages.

Jaitpur has been one of the famous centres of 'Khadi' cloth in India. Khadi is cloth which is hand spun as well as hand woven. During the freedom movement in India khadi



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cloth was popularised particularly by Mahatma Gandhi for its capacity to provide employment to a very large number of people in villages and small towns in a self-reliant way.

Khadi cloth is considered healthy for skin. It is also the most environment friendly fabric, causing no emission of greenhouse gases and requiring no commercial energy. There is thus tremendous scope for marketing it as an environment-friendly product with a tremendous capacity for providing employment and reducing poverty in remote villages.

Even without such special efforts, weavers of Jaitpur had managed to hold their own against the competition provided by mills and powerlooms because of the well-established quality of their cloth.

"We know there are no big profits in our trade, but several years we earned a honest and satisfactory livelihood and we had no complaints," says Panni, a weaver. "In addition to their weaving work there were several related employments in spinning, colouring, tailoring, packing and related work so that in all about nine thousand people were directly supported by this work.", adds Abhishek, a social activist who has done much to help weavers.

Then what went wrong? About two years ago a person with criminal connections managed to occupy the key post in the local Gandhi Ashram (as the Khadi-networking institutions are generally called). He threatened several people with violence to grab this post, and always goes around in the company of gunmen.

Then, villagers allege, he started buying cheap, poor quality cloth from elsewhere. This cloth was stamped as 'Jaitpur Khadi' and sold at a high price. Thus while the main official earned huge profits, the local weavers did not get



any orders so that their work came to a standstill.

The workers went from pillar to post to get justice, but the criminals proved more powerful than them. After a long time the Commissioner, an upright officer named Mr. V.S. Pandey took some action and the election of Gandhi Ashram, Jaitpur, was held to be illegal. However soon the Commissioner who had issued this order was himself transferred so that the process of restarting the work has been delayed. Meanwhile the weavers and social activists who are playing a leading role have faced threats to their life from criminals.

Weavers have been forced to go to far away places like Delhi and Punjab to meet their subsistence needs. A woman Rampyari says proudly that her son is considered one of the most skilled weavers. "Ask anyone", she challenges. She insists that I should enter her home to see the cloth he had woven earlier. "But now we're without work, without any earning," she laments.

All this can lead to a long term crisis from which the Jaitpur weavers and their Khadi trade may never recover. This can happen if the supply of poor quality cloth under the name of Jaitpur Khadi is allowed to continue for some more time. As Abhishek says, "This will be most tragic for the entire Bundelkhand region. We were thinking of using the base provided by Jaitpur to spread this work to other areas as well, but now the very source from which we could learn is threatened."

This tragic turn of events in Jaitpur is particularly unfortunate at a time when weavers are facing global competition. As Bhagwat a social activist says, "This is a time when weavers particularly Khadi weavers need all the encouragement they can get from the government and from ethically

conscious consumers."

Even though efforts to get the work re-started at Jaitpur continue, this tragic situation has drawn attention to the wider problems of corrupt and criminal persons trying to enter Khadi institutions - institutions which were once considered sacred due to their close association with the freedom movement. This should be resisted and checked so that the work of Khadi along with other village and cottage industries can continue to benefit artisans who are facing increasing difficulties due to competition from machine-made, factory-produced goods. In the middle of difficulties, there is also a growing market for their products in the ethical market segment which will value the contribution their hand-made goods make to reduction of poverty and protection of environment.

**Note :** This report was written on the basis of a visit in year 2005. Since this report was written, small initiatives have already started to again provide livelihood avenues to unemployed weavers.



## Annexure-6

# **Alarming Increase in Distress conditions in Bundelkhand - (Based Mainly on Media Reports and a few interviews)**

## **Widespread Hunger**

Newspapers have prominently highlighted an official survey in Banda district which found that over 4 lakh (out of a total population over 15 lakh) were affected by hunger and



nearly 40 thousand were on the verge of starvation. (see Dainik Jagran, Kanpur edition, January 4). Baberu tehsil is worst affected. - Dainik Jagran Jan.4, 2004.

### **Suicides Related to Hunger and Debt**

According to Avadhesh Gautam, Director of a voluntary organisation Panchayat Adhyayan Sandarbh Kendra, who has monitored reports on suicides in the media supported by other sources, as many as 200 suicides took place in just one district (Banda district) up to August 25 and out of these the overwhelming majority were related to poverty, debt and economic stress.

(Based on interview on telephone)

- In year 2003 two women committed suicide in a single family - Aseena Begum and her daughter. The mother could no longer withstand her daughter's hunger. (Dainik Jagran, Kanpur, Jan. 4, 2004) (District Banda).
- In year 2003 Siyanandan Yadav committed suicide in Jakhi village of Kamasin Block. No food had been cooked or eaten in this household for two days (Dainik Jagran, Kanpur, Jan. 4, 2004) (District Banda)
- In year 2003 In Gatpatipur Kalan village of Naraini tehsil Lallu Singh committed suicide (District Banda), Dainik Jagran, Jan 4, 2004)
- In Hardauni village of Barokhar Block Barelal Raidas committed suicide, his brother Chotulal said later that his children were forced to go to bed hungry on several days. (Dainik Jagran, Jan. 4, 2004)
- Other hunger related suicides reported in 2003 from Banda district included Ravindra Singh of Palra village and Punha of Beldan village. (Danik Jagran Jan.4, 2004)

● In Padui village of Sadar tehsil, Kishorilal Sahu, a farmer, committed suicide in July 2006. He had Rs. 59000 loan outstanding against him (Rs. 50000 private and Rs. 9000 bank loan). 90 other families in the same village are indebted to a single bank. Recovery notices have been served to over a dozen of them. A total of 6 debt-ridden persons have committed suicide in this village. Village pradhan says combining private and bank loans almost all farmers are indebted.

Bable Yadav (18 years) committed suicide in year 2000. His family of six brothers was indebted to the extent of Rs. 50,000. When he had no money for clothes, he committed suicide.

Bindu Yadav (18) committed suicide in year 2001. His family was indebted.

In year 2004 Ramashankar (16) hanged himself. His family was indebted but the boy had made things worse by involvement in gambling.

Raidas (21 years) committed suicide after getting indebted in the course of getting treatment for illness.

Kamla (25) wife of Avadhesh Sahu committed suicide leaving behind 4 children.

In this village maximum population is of dalits.

Social activists like Pushpendra blamed neglect of irrigation for the poverty of villagers - Amar Ujala July 7 and 8, 2006.

Srinagar, Mahoba, indebted farmer Ramesh Chandra first tried to supplement farm income by taking up another job, when even that did not help to pay back Allahabad bank's loan he committed suicide - Amar Ujala Aug. 28.



Mahoba - 4 farmers have committed suicide due to growing indebtedness during last 4 months (1) Mahari village of Kulpahar tehsil - Jagdish Rawat (35 years) farmer of 27 bigha land committed suicide - on May 26 after accumulation of Rs. 2.50 lakh debt (2) Indebted farmer Munna lied down on the railway track with his wife. His wife died but villagers dragged away Munna at the last minute. He lost his hand. (3) In village Baras of Srinagar area Babulal first lost a part of his land to moneylenders, then committed suicide on August 9. (4) In village Bhandra of Srinagar area indebted Ramesh Chandra Tiwari committed suicide - Amar Ujala Aug. 28, 2006. Ramesh's son says bank officials had threatened to send his father to jail, due to which he hanged himself in his fields - Dainik Jagran Aug. 23. Ramesh had 7 acres unirrigated land.

In Baragaon, Kakarha village, (Pailani P.S., Banda district) Ramashankar, an indebted farmer committed suicide on July 27. He had borrowed Rs. 40,000 from Tulsi Grameen Bank, but due to adverse weather conditions his farm did not yield adequately to enable him to return loan. Recently bank officers threatened him to return loan or else his land and house will be auctioned. - Dainik Jagran July 28, 2006 80% families are indebted in this village, 20% have received recovery notices. Over Rs. 6 lakhs are owed by them to banks. Tubewells have not been repaired for a long time.

### **Loans Taken By Influential Rich People In the Name of Poor People**

- 6 dalits in Narsinghpur village of Naraini tehsil (District Banda) were duped badly as loans worth Rs. 40,000 each were illegally taken in their name. They realised this only when recovery proceedings were initiated against them. (Amar Ujala, May 23, 2005).

- A loan of Rs. 33000 was taken against the name of Maiyadin of village Sahpalan, tehsil Naraini from Tulsi Gramin Bank, Naraini. At the time of the transaction, Maiyadin was away in Panna, Madhya Pradesh. - Aaj, May 23, 2005)

- Jarar village, Girwan P.S., District Banda - 6 workers complained that false loans of Rs. 10,000 each were taken in their name by their 'master' on whose fields they work - Dainik Jagran Aug. 20,

Achelal Raidas of Madhopur Panchayat (Mahua Block of Banda district) suffered greatly as influential persons obtained loans against his 6 bigha land of which he got very little.

When Kamta returned after working in Delhi to his village Bhandra, (in Srinagar P.S., Mahoba district) and learnt that someone had borrowed against his land, he suffered a heart attack and died immediately - Dainik Jagran. Aug. 29.

Dom families of Neduwa Makhanpur village, Naraini tehsil - others have taken loans in their names, grabbed their antyodya ration cards and occupied their Indira Awas home while the doms have to share their huts with pigs. Their land pattas are also occupied by the rich.

### **Bonded Labourers**

In Bhanvarpur village of Naraini tehsil (Dist. Banda) Kamta's son Lakhan used to work for a rich land-owner. When he refused to toil under exploitative conditions amounting to bondage, kerosene oil was poured over him and he was burnt to death. Bhuri Devi of the same village alleged that her husband had to work for 14 years against a debt of Rs. 1300 taken 14 years back. After his death Bhuri Devi was being asked to work by the landlord who said that Rs. 1800 is still



to be paid back. Kallu said his father Snehi died after toiling for 12 years in bondage. Kallu also worked for one year after this in bondage. When he refused to work the landlord told him he still has to pay back 125 maunds of wheat. - Dainik Jagran - 23 May 2005. The bonded workers were paid only 2.5 kgs. of grain. When they protest against bondage village paths and toilet places were closed for them.

### **Indebtedness**

Inability to pay back loans is leading to serious indebtedness problems for buyers of tractors. Two farmers have become landless in the process. Farmer is forced to continue to pay back loan even when tractor is taken away from for non-payment of past instalments - Amar Ujala, July 2, 2006.

Corruption in giving loans under K.C.C. (Kisan Credit Card) scheme has prepared the ground for the likelihood of loss of their land by a large number of farmers - Amar Ujala.

Srinagar-Mahoba - Following five year drought 50 per cent farmers of the area are indebted. - Amar Ujala Aug. 28, 2006

### **Hunger Deaths**

Old widow dies, had gone without food for several days before death - Aaj Aug. 28, 2006.

Five poverty related deaths have taken place in Narhi village (Naraini tehsil, Banda district). On July 29, villagers gathered to observe 'dhikkar divas' and threatened to commit collective suicide if they are not provided income and employment opportunities - Dainik Jagran July 30. In this village Bhagwat Prasad Prajapati died in 2005 due to extreme poverty/hunger. He was badly indebted. After his death creditors troubled his son, Sundarlal, a class XI student, to such an extent that he tried to hang himself and could be



saved' only at the last moment by his cousin - Amar Ujala July 30. At the 'dhikkar divas' July 29 there were several persons who were extremely hungry. The land of some of them is occupied by influential persons of neighbouring villages. Despite suffering from acute poverty and hunger they don't have BPL cards. Only 4 or 5 have got jobs under employment guarantee scheme but not even one has got work. Kamla is one victim of hunger-related deaths in the village. She was the lone earning member. After her death her children have to beg for food. When Shambhu Prajapati died, food had not been cooked for five days in the family of six. - Amar Ujala July 30.

### **Suicides and deaths related to disappointment with Public Distribution System**

Sitaram Raidas (45 years) of Nivaich village, Sadar Tehsil, Banda district, learnt on Aug. 14 that his antyodaya card has been cancelled even though he remains extremely poor. On the same night he had a heart attack and died. There was no sheet to cover his body so a cloth carried by him was used. Next morning villagers collected donations for his funereal. Villagers said his name had been entered for employment guarantee scheme but he did not get job card and he had no work for last 20 days. There was not a single kg. of food in the home at the time of death. His sons Chunnu (14 years) and Vanshgopal (16 years) were away working as migrant workers. - Amar Ujala Aug. 8, 2006.

### **Other such reported deaths/suicides**

Chunvad Ali of Semaria village (in Chitrakut district) and Lalu Raidas (30 years) a dalit youth of Patra village.









